

A Troubled Soul's Cry for Vindication

Psalm 35 (Page 406 in the BPB)

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Introduction:

A prayer of lament, i.e. "a passionate expression of grief or sorrow."

Imprecatory psalms are those [psalms] that imprecate - invoke judgment, calamity or curses upon one's enemies or those perceived as the enemies of God (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imprecatory_Psalms).

Examples of Imprecatory Psalms are Psalms 5, 10, 17, 35, 58, 59, 69, 70, 79, 83, 109, 129, 137, 140.

The prayer may be divided into three sections; 1-10, 11-18, 19-28. Each section contains a plea to the LORD, a lament and a promise to praise the LORD.

1. The First Lament (vv. 1-10)

A. A Plea to the LORD for Help (vv. 1-3)

¹Contend, O LORD, with those who contend with me;
Fight against those who fight against me.

²Take hold of buckler and shield
And rise up for my help.

³Draw also the spear and the battle-axe to meet those who pursue me;

Say to my soul, "I am your salvation."

B. A Prayer for Vindication (vv. 4-8)

⁴Let those be ashamed and dishonored who seek my life;
Let those be turned back and humiliated who devise evil against me.

⁵Let them be like chaff before the wind,
With the angel of the LORD driving *them* on.

⁶Let their way be dark and slippery,
With the angel of the LORD pursuing them.

⁷For without cause they hid their net for me;
Without cause they dug a pit for my soul.

⁸Let destruction come upon him unawares,
And let the net which he hid catch himself;
Into that very destruction let him fall.

C. A Promise to Exalt the LORD. (vv. 9-10)

⁹And my soul shall rejoice in the LORD;
It shall exult in His salvation.

¹⁰All my bones will say, "LORD, who is like You,
Who delivers the afflicted from him who is too strong for him,
And the afflicted and the needy from him who robs him?"

2. The Second Lament (vv.11-18)

A. A Presentation of Unjust Treatment (vv. 11-16)

¹¹Malicious witnesses rise up;
They ask me of things that I do not know.

¹²They repay me evil for good,
To the bereavement of my soul.

¹³But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth;
I humbled my soul with fasting,
And my prayer kept returning to my bosom.

¹⁴I went about as though it were my friend or brother;
I bowed down mourning, as one who sorrows for a mother.

¹⁵But at my stumbling they rejoiced and gathered themselves together;
The smiters whom I did not know gathered together against me,
They slandered me without ceasing.

¹⁶Like godless jesters at a feast,
They gnashed at me with their teeth.

B. A Plea to the LORD for Help (v. 17)

¹⁷Lord, how long will You look on?
Rescue my soul from their ravages,
My only *life* from the lions.

C. A Promise to Honor the LORD (v. 18)

¹⁸I will give You thanks in the great congregation;
I will praise You among a mighty throng.

3. The Third Lament (vv. 19-28)

A. A Plea for Vindication (vv. 19-26)

¹⁹Do not let those who are wrongfully my enemies rejoice over me;
Nor let those who hate me without cause wink maliciously.

²⁰For they do not speak peace,
But they devise deceitful words against those who are quiet in the land.

²¹They opened their mouth wide against me;
They said, "Aha, aha, our eyes have seen it!"

²²You have seen it, O LORD, do not keep silent;
O Lord, do not be far from me.

²³Stir up Yourself, and awake to my right
And to my cause, my God and my Lord.

²⁴Judge me, O LORD my God, according to Your righteousness,
And do not let them rejoice over me.

²⁵Do not let them say in their heart, "Aha, our desire!"
Do not let them say, "We have swallowed him up!"

²⁶Let those be ashamed and humiliated altogether who rejoice at my distress;
Let those be clothed with shame and dishonor
who magnify themselves over me.

B. An Exhortation to God's People to Praise the LORD (v. 27)

²⁷Let them shout for joy and rejoice, who favor my vindication;
And let them say continually, "The LORD be magnified,
Who delights in the prosperity of His servant."

C. A Promise to Praise the LORD (v. 28)

²⁸And my tongue shall declare Your righteousness
And Your praise all day long.

Application:

How can Christians Pray Imprecatory Psalms?

1. These are prayers not curses.
2. They are prayers for God to do what He has promised to do, in His covenant.

3. These prayers are against God's enemies, and assume that the Psalmist's enemies are the same as God's enemies: ultimately this can only be true of Jesus Christ.

4. Conversion is a possible way in which these prayers may be answered.

5. These prayers are against hardened sinners.

Christopher Ash. *Teaching the Psalms*, Volume one – From text to message. Christian Focus Publications, Ltd, 2017 (Pp.129-34).